

# Mesoamerican & Andean Civilizations



## UNIT 8

THE STUDENTS WILL DEMONSTRATE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETIES IN CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA.

# Mesoamerica

- In what is now southern Mexico and Central America
- Rain forests cover the region
- Fertile soil made this a good area for farming
- People first appeared in this area around 12,000 BC
- Maize (corn) being grown around 3500 BC

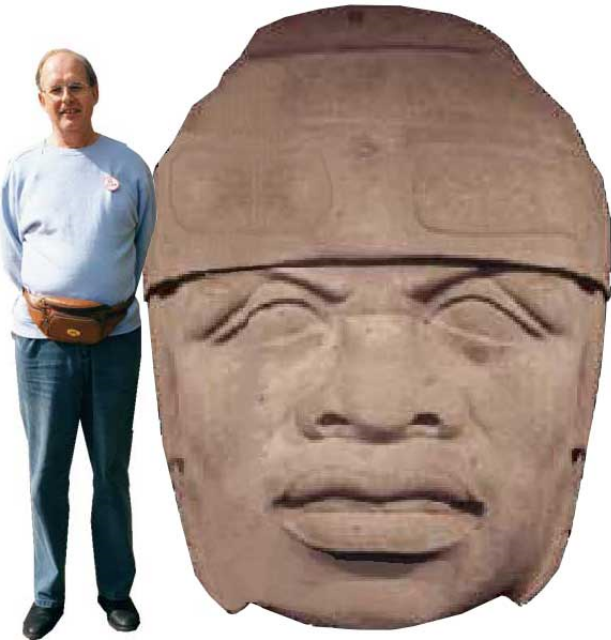


# The Olmec

- First urban civilization formed in Mesoamerica – around 1200 BC
- Built the first pyramids in the Americas
- Developed the first writing system in the Americas
- Traded with others from far away
- Civilization ended around 400 BC

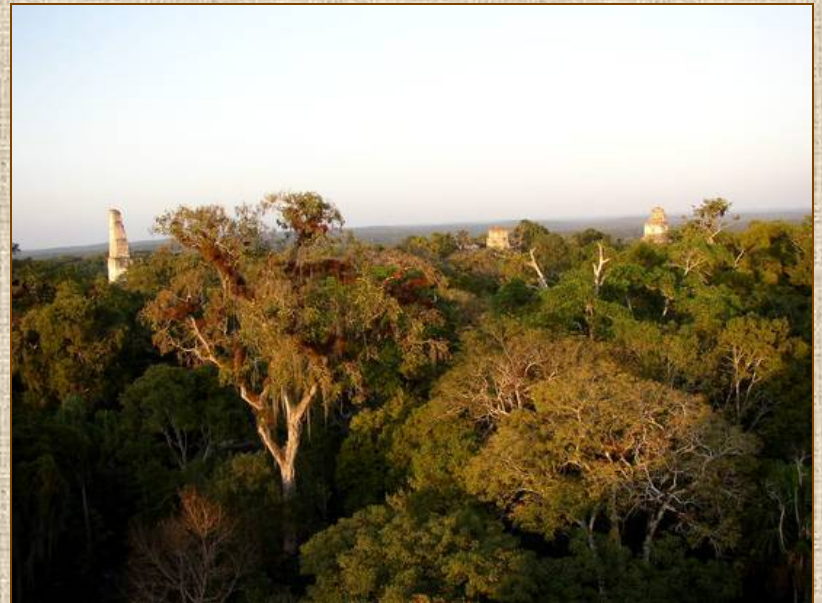


“The "classic" Olmec Head at Park La Venta in Villahermosa, Mexico. The multi-ton monolith from which this head was sculpted had to be brought to the swampy coastal plain of Tabasco State from a distant source of rock, since rocks of this source are not found in the region of La Venta. The Olmecs are presumed to have been the oldest Mesoamerican civilization, and like later civilizations of the region, they did not possess metal tools, wheels, or pack animals. These constraints make the carvings at Park La Venta all the more amazing.”



# The Maya

- Developed in Mesoamerica around 1000 BC
- Lived in an area of thick forests making farming hard
- Grew to more than 40 cities of 5,000 to 50,000 people each during the classic age from AD 250 to 900
- Spread throughout the Yucatan Peninsula
- Traded goods to different areas of Mesoamerica



# Land of The Mayans

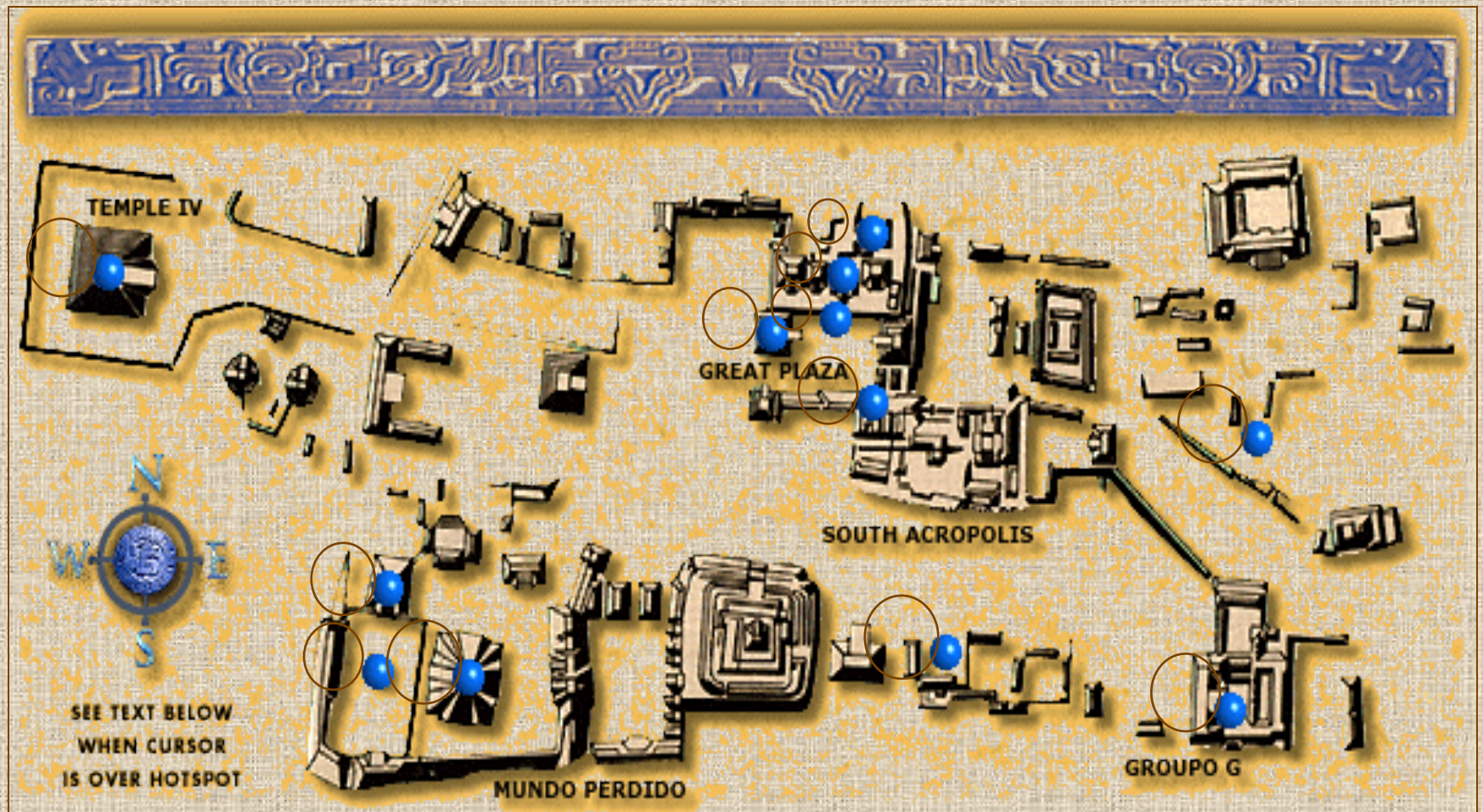


# Mayan Cities

- Built large pyramids, temples, and palaces
- Canals built to control the flow of water through cities
- Large plazas built for public events



# Tikal



# Tikal Main Court



# Recreation



# Agriculture

Hillsides turned into flat terraces so crops could be grown close to cities



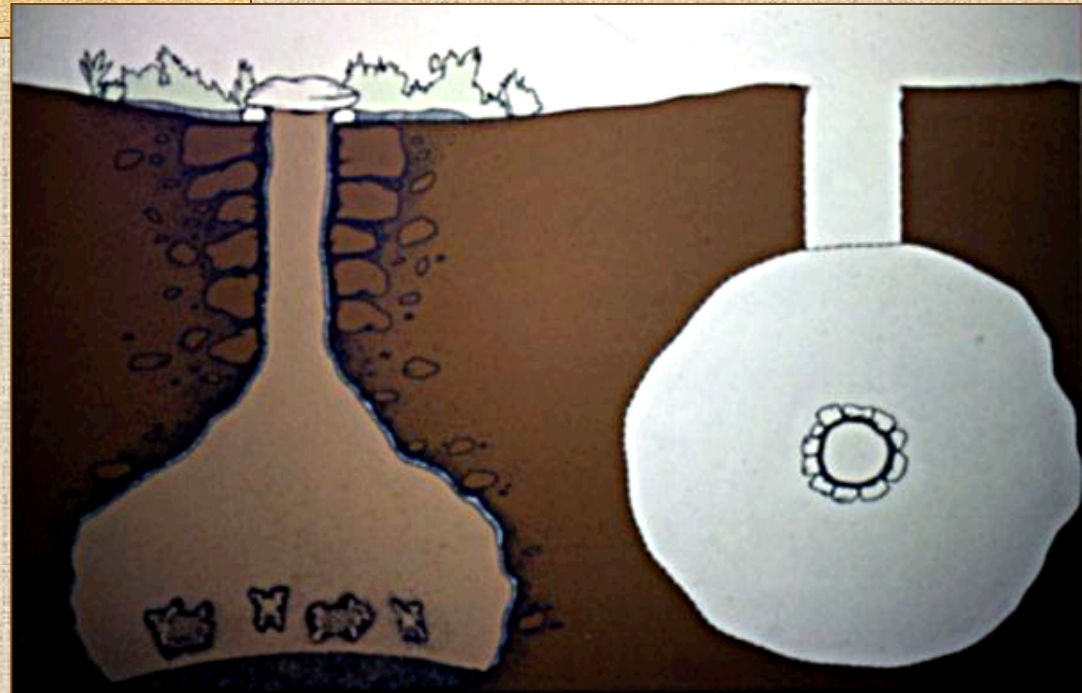
# The Mayans and Maize



- Chac, God of Rain



# Underground Storage



# Maya Society

- Complex class structure
- Upper class included kings, priests, warriors, and merchants
- Lower class included most of the Maya
- Farmers had to give crops to ruler and serve in the army
- Slaves held the lowest position in society
- Slaves included orphans, slaves' children, and people who owed money

# Religion

- Worshipped many gods
- The most important god was the creator
- Other gods included a sun god, moon goddess, and maize god
- People believed they had to please the gods by offering human blood



# Maya Achievements

- Art and architectural achievements
- Sculpture and jade and gold jewelry
- Built cities using metal tools
- Mayan cities largest architectural achievement
- Developed the calendar and number systems



# Built observatories to study the stars



# Developed a writing system similar to Egyptian hieroglyphics



sky



king



house



child



city

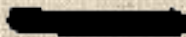
## Math and Numbering System



0



1



5



18



20

# Mayan Glyphs



# Causes of the Decline of the Mayan Civilization

- Began to collapse around 900
- The cause of the collapse is unknown
- Warfare may have contributed
- Kings made demands of people and they may have rebelled
- A long period of dry weather may have made it hard to grow crops
- A mix of events probably led to the decline

# The Toltecs and Quetzalcoatl

## Quetzalcoatl: The God of Wisdom & Learning



# The Aztec Empire

- Ruled a large empire in central Mesoamerica
- Founded around 1100
- Controlled a huge trade network



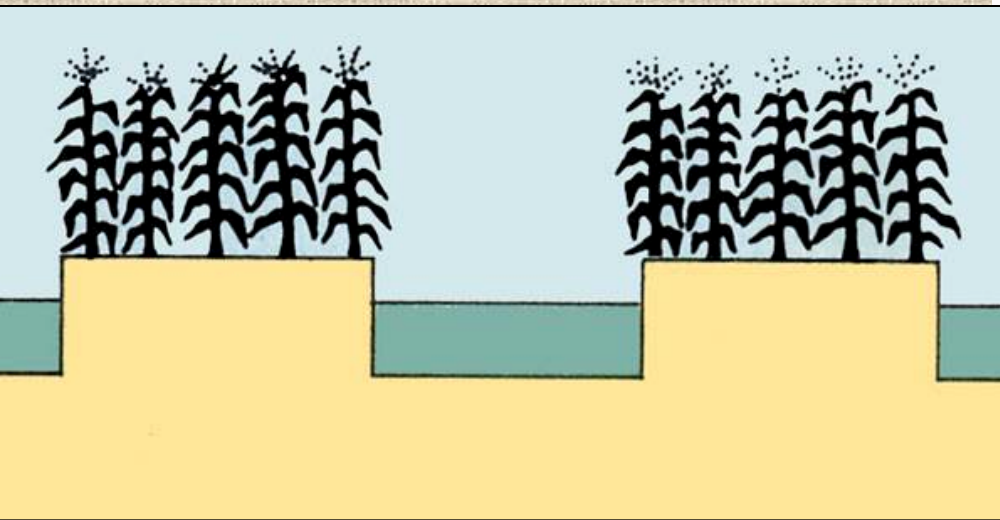
# Aztec Society

- People divided into social classes
- Kings and nobles the most important
- Priests and warriors below kings
- Merchants and artisans next
- Farmers and slaves the lowest



# Aztec Achievements

- Built floating gardens called *chinampas*
- Studied astronomy and created a calendar
- Built bridges and canals
- Had a complex writing system



# Tenochtitlan: The “Venice” of the Americas

Population:  
200,000 to 400,000





# Aztec Writing



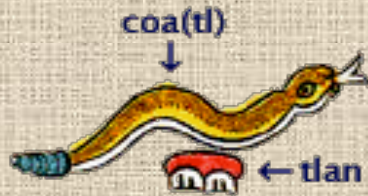
Chilapan



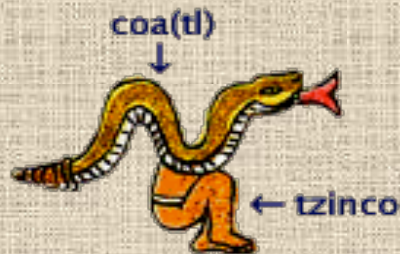
Colhuacan



Ocelotepec



Coatlan

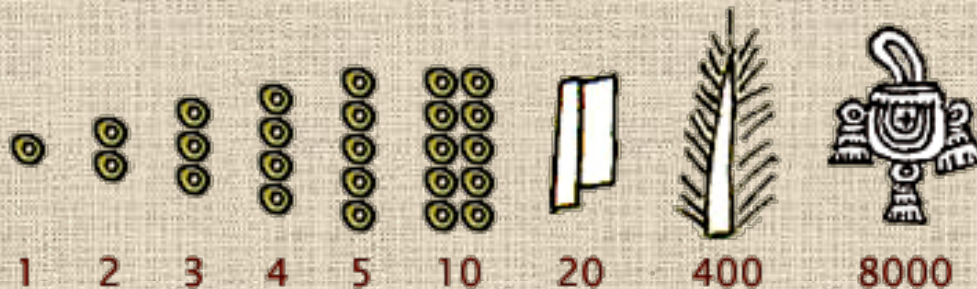


Coatzinco



Ahuacatlan

# Aztec Math



# Cortez and the Aztecs

## The Return of Quetzalcoatl ?

- Spanish explorer Hernan Cortez arrived in Mexico in 1519
- Aztec emperor Montezuma II thought Cortez was a god
- Cortez took the emperor prisoner
- The Aztecs became angry and drove the Spanish out
- Cortez came back in 1521 and conquered the Aztecs



# The Inca Empire

- Began as a small tribe in the Andes in South America
- By the 1500's empire stretched from Ecuador to Chile
- 12 million people in empire
- Government was centralized and controlled many aspects of life
- Incas paid the government in labor and goods



# Inca Society

- Most Incans farmers
- No merchants or markets in the empire
- Government officials gave people goods through the labor tax system



# Inca Achievements

- Built massive buildings made of stone blocks
- Produced art of gold and silver
- No written language





# Incan Terrace Farming



# Maize in Incan Pottery & Gold Work



# Pizarro and the Incas

- Spaniards came to Peru in 1530
- When the Incas would not convert to Christianity, the Spanish attacked
- Spanish defeated the Incans in 1537 and took control of the area

